

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4808

DEPT PASS TREASURY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (BLUMENTHAL, W. MICHAEL)
SUBJECT: NOVEMBER TRIP OF TREASURY SECRETARY TO MIDDLE EAST

REF: STATE 217702

1. WELCOME PROPOSED VISIT OF TREASURY SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL TO KUWAIT NOVEMBER 21-22. I BELIEVE THIS FOLLOW-UP OF HIS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VISIT LAST NOVEMBER WILL CONTRIBUTE FURTHER TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER RELATIONS WITH KUWAITI LEADERS. EMBASSY CONTROL OFFICER FOR VISIT WILL BE DCM PETER A. SUTHERLAND.

2. I INFORMED FINANCE MINISTER ABDUL-RAHMAN AL-ATEEQI ON AUGUST 29 OF THE PROPOSED VISIT, WHICH HE WELCOMED AND INDICATED IT WAS CONVENIENT FOR HIM AS TO TIMING. HE LOOKED FORWARD TO A FURTHER FRANK EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL, ALTHOUGH AT THIS TIME HE HAD NO SPECIFIC SUBJECTS IN MIND THAT HE MIGHT WISH TO RAISE. HOWEVER, HE ASSURED ME THAT KUWAITI SIDE WOULD BE FULLY PREPARED FOR THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR EXISTING ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL QUESTIONS.

3. I SUGGESTED THAT THE TREASURY SECRETARY'S PROGRAM INCLUDE
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CALLS ON THE AMIR SHAIKH SABER AL-AHMAD AL-JABER AL-SABAH AND ALSO THE HEIR APPARENT/PRIME MINISTER SHAIKH SAAD AL-ABDULLAH, WHICH HE AGREED WAS APPROPRIATE. I NOTED THAT, BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANT OIL QUESTIONS, SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL WOULD PROBABLY WISH ALSO TO MEET WITH OIL MINISTER SHAIKH ALI KHALIFA AL-SABAH (WHO, IT WILL BE RECALLED, ATTENDED THE BLUMENTHAL/ATEEQI MEETING LAST NOVEMBER IN HIS CAPACITY AS FINANCE MINISTRY

UNDERSECRETARY). ATEEQI QUICKLY DECLARED THAT HE WOULD ARRANGE FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF THE OIL MINISTER IN HIS MEETING SO THAT NO SEPARATE CALL WOULD BE NECESSARY. FYI: I DID NOT SUGGEST A CALL ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER SINCE TIME AVAILABLE TO THE TREASURY SECRETARY WILL BE LIMITED TO THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 22 AND SINCE THE MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER LAST YEAR WAS THE LEAST PRODUCTIVE ONE. HOWEVER, THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE DIRECTOR TOLD ME THAT SHAIKH SABAH AL-AHMAD AL-SABAH WOULD BE IN KUWAIT ON PROJECTED DATES. END FYI

4. ON THE SOCIAL SIDE, THE FINANCE MINISTER OFFERED TO HOST A LUNCH FOR THE TREASURY SECRETARY IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL, BUT WHEN I POINTED OUT THE HOUR WOULD BE RATHER LATE AFTER THE DEBARKING PROCEDURES, HE OFFERED TO HOST A DINNER IN THE SECRETARY'S HONOR ON NOVEMBER 21. AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL WOULD BE FOR ME TO OFFER A RECEPTION FOR THE SECRETARY ON NOVEMBER 21 TO WHICH LEADING KUWAITI AND AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN COULD BE INVITED IN ADDITION TO SENIOR KUWAITI OFFICIALS. ATEEQI COULD OFFER LUNCH NOVEMBER 22 FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THE MORNING MEETINGS, PROVIDED THAT SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL WOULD BE WILLING TO POSTPONE HIS DEPARTURE FROM KUWAIT TO LONDON AN HOUR OR SO. ATEEQI WAS AGREEABLE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT AS WELL, BUT I WOULD FIRST WANT TO CHECK IT OUT WITH THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL IF THIS ALTERNATIVE WERE PREFERRED. I WOULD APPRECIATE AN INDICATION OF SECRETARY CONFIDENTIAL

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BLUMENTHAL'S PREFERENCE IN THIS RESPECT.

5. IN THE ABSENCE OF THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL, WHO WILL RETURN AFTER THE ID AL-FITR HOLIDAYS, I SPOKE BY TELEPHONE WITH THE MOST SENIOR PROTOCOL OFFICER AVAILABLE, WHO TOOK NOTE OF THE PROPOSED VISIT AND PROMISED TO CONFIRM WHETHER THESE DATES WERE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOK. BECAUSE OF THE LONG ID HOLIDAY UPCOMING, I DO NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE A FIRM REPLY UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9 AT THE EARLIEST. IN ANY EVENT, THE KEY MAN IN VISIT IS FINANCE MINISTER ATEEQI AND HE IS FREE ON THOSE DATES. MOREOVER, THE AMIR RARELY TRAVELS AND IS EXPECTED TO BE HERE.

6. INCIDENTALLY, I INQUIRED WHETHER ATEEQI HAD ANY SUBJECTS HE WISHED TO RAISE WITH SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL WHEN HE ATTENDS THE IMF MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON SEPTEMBER 25. HE SAID THERE WERE NONE, BUT WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE THE SECRETARY IF THE LATTER SO WISHED. I COMMENTED THAT SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL WOULD BE EXTREMELY BUSY THIS PERIOD AND NOTED THAT THERE WOULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EXTENDED DISCUSSIONS WHEN HE VISITED KUWAIT. I, THEREFORE, BELIEVE A BILATERAL MEETING WITH ATEEQI IS NOT NECESSARY, BUT A SPECIAL GREETING AT SOME

POINT DURING THE MEETINGS BY SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL WOULD BE
APPROPRIATE.
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